DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 336 993 FL 019 570

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TITLE The Proficiency-Based German Class: Experiences and Perspectives.
PUB DATE 86
NOTE 23p.; In: "Perspectives on Proficiency: Curriculum & Instruction. Dimension: Language '84-'85." (see FL 019 565). p51-72.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Second Language Programs; *Competency Based Education; Course Descriptions; *Curriculum Design; *Educational Objectives; Educational Strategies; *German; Higher Education; Instructional Effectiveness; Intensive Language Courses; *Language Proficiency; Language Tests; Second Language Instruction

ABSTRACT

The demand for an improved international dimension in American education is a move in the right direction, and American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) and Educational Testing Service efforts in defining foreign language proficiency guidelines and developing a reliable mechanism for testing oral proficiency have resulted in valuable tools for language teaching. The Oral Proficiency Interview is an accurate measure of ability and a demanding exercise for the examiner. However, the test and guidelines provide evaluative tools, not a curriculum. An examination of standard university language activities and textbooks reveals strengths and weaknesses for a proficiency-oriented teaching approach. After several attempts to inject some proficiency-oriented ingredients into a traditional college German curriculum, an intensive course designed from scratch and following the proficiency guidelines has been most effective in moving students toward proficiency, as illustrated in conversations with the highest and the most modest achievers in the class. Goals for the first four semesters of German instruction and a course outline are appended and an 11-item bibliography is included. (MSE)

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The Proficiency-Based German Class:

Experiences and Perspectives

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The dire need for internationalizing education in the United States has finally been recognized, not just by educators and by the business community, but also by our government. The reasons for the growing interest in foreign language training are varied. Intra-nationally speaking, language study has been proposed as "a cure for provincialism" (Starr, 1976) and as an agent that serves to increase linguistic awareness and, thus, to improve native language competence. Inter-nationally speaking, language is a medium of verbal exchange as well as a medium of insight into the culture. Consequently, language study achieves a double objective: it prepares the way for transnational communication and transcultural sensitivity. Both are vital for the continued growth of our nation and its leadership role in several respects. *International relations*: Our functional illiteracy in foreign languages has not only adversely affected our diplomatic as well as basic human relations to other countries, but it is an embarrassment and a contributing factor to our image of arrogance around the world. *Security*: The National Advisory Board on International Education stressed the crucial role of foreign languages for this nation's security, a view which was repeatedly amplified by government representatives who claimed that the deficiencies in language training are a major hazard to our national security. *Trade*: The fact that three-quarters of our wheat is sold abroad, that 200 of the 250 largest multinational corporations are U.S. owned, and that 20,000 American firms engage in export of products or services to foreign markets demonstrates dramatically the importance of trade for our economy and the need for skills that enable us to communicate in the international arena of commerce. *Tourism*: The number of foreign tourists in this country has grown by more than 1,000 percent in the past two decades. In fact, 1980 was the first year in which foreign visitors to the U.S.

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outnumbered Americans traveling abroad. If we want to make these travelers comfortable here and tap the markets related to the tourist industry, we need to be able to welcome our visitors in their native tongue. *Employment*: More and more professions, ranging from social work to nursing, from secretarial sciences to engineering, are beginning to recognize the value of foreign languages and are looking increasingly for employees with high levels of proficiency. According to The President's Commission on Foreign Languages (1979), there existed 29,000 positions within the Federal Government alone which required knowledge of a foreign language.

In response to these and the other needs, many voices began calling for the addition of an "international dimension" to our education programs and for a renewal of foreign language training and international studies in schools and colleges. The 1979 President's Commission on Foreign Language and International Studies and the more recent Commission on Excellence in Education have done a great service by making our deficiencies in foreign languages a national issue. Efforts are under way to help realize the demands formulated by these commissions, such as the Title VI of the Higher Education Act, Part B, which makes available funds for business and international education programs. Impressive strides have been achieved on the regional and local level where foreign languages are increasingly introduced as a compulsory area of study in high schools and colleges.

These developments are encouraging. However, it does not suffice to simply observe and enumerate these gains. We now have the responsibility to maintain this momentum and to provide a learning environment that satisfies the needs so widely recognized. Otherwise, this movement towards internationalizing our education system is going to die away like so many other educational reform efforts. The first order of business is a rigorous critical appraisal of our present activities.

We will have to honestly face up to shortcomings in regard to teaching objectives, strategies and tools, to assessment principles and testing mechanisms. Next we will have to redefine our goals and, subsequently, revise our curricula, our textbooks, our instructional techniques and our testing methods. Fortunately, established institutions of language learning have already done a lot of legwork in this direction, and their findings and accomplishments are at our disposal right now. We are particularly thinking of the efforts made by ACTFL and ETS in defining proficiency guidelines and establishing a reliable mechanism for testing oral proficiency.

Our goals in foreign language teaching have always been legitimate and do not need to be changed in a wholesale way. We want to continue to develop the four basic skills, listening and reading comprehension, speaking and writing, though not necessarily in this order. And we want to continue to

infuse our courses with a good dose of the foreign culture. However, our tangible, step-by-step objectives leading to this set of targets require careful thought and drastic revision. We need to ask ourselves what we can do to improve our methods and materials in order to achieve the best results possible.

A major factor to be considered in the process of revision is that of material context. So far, we have generally oriented our courses on the introductory level towards issues of tourist and student life, at the intermediate and advanced level toward literature. This approach may meet the needs of our majors, a declining clientele, but it does not satisfy the need of the majority of students who are going to pursue careers in business, industry, law, technology, or some kind of service. Our curricula will have to take into account the interests of these students, provide texts and materials addressing their prospective professional realm, and incorporate the linguistic and lexical items characteristic of these disciplines. If other disciplines require languages and make use of our services, we should have the courtesy to take their needs into consideration. After all, it is one of the principles of international relations that one be understanding of and accommodating toward others' needs. This maxim should also apply to interdisciplinary relations.

Furthermore, we will have to develop more efficient and effective strategies to achieve good language skills that can be used in the work place. We believe that no one would argue in earnest that our current approach is satisfactory in developing skills with which the candidate can actually function in real-life situations. Admittedly, some changes need to be made.

For the first time in the history of the profession, foreign language teachers now have available a tool with which they can accurately measure the speaking ability of any student. This tool, the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), developed by ACTFL and ETS on the basis of the testing procedure long used by federal agencies, is in reality a highly structured conversation, which for the student is as natural as possible, but for the interviewer, especially at the lower levels, is a demanding exercise in eliciting, listening, evaluating, and structuring the discourse flow. The OPI elicits a language sample that indicates which *functions* a candidate can perform in which *contexts* and with what *accuracy*. The functions are defined globally by the *ACTFL Provisional Proficiency Guidelines* (1982) as common tasks in language use that native speakers would perform under various circumstances, such as asking questions, describing, narrating, and supporting opinion. (Lowe, 1983) The functions are arranged hierarchically, the lower level functions being those that one might expect learners to acquire early in their experience with the second language, the high level ones being acquired much later. The contexts and content of the OPI range from the concrete to

the abstract, from the ego-centered to all possible topics of conversation in human society. The third compoment, accuracy, refers to the success of the communication act, that is, whether the candidate has minimally gotten his message across, or has even partially or completely miscommunicated due to such things as poor pronunciation or confused grammar and vocabulary, or, on the other extreme, speaks in a way very similar to an educated native speaker.

Performance during the OPI is compared with written descriptions of levels of performance in spoken language, the *ACTFL Provisional Proficiency Guidelines* (1982). Since these guidelines are now reasonably well known in the profession, a brief summary of the different levels of speaking ability will here suffice to suggest some of the possible curricular implications. On the ACTFL/ETS academic scale, four major levels of speaking ability are differentiated: Novice, Intermediate, Advanced, and Superior. The Novice candidates speak mainly in words and memorized phrases. They recycle what the interviewer says with frequent errors and demonstrate no real ability to create with the langauge. The next higher level speakers, the Intermediates, are characterized by their ability to speak in sentences that they have created to accomplish so-called survival tasks. Each sentence tends to be a discrete entity unto itself and shows little evidence of being integrated into a narrative whole, which is precisely what the Advanced speaker can do. Advanced level speakers can make successful reference to different time frames and speak on the paragraph level, accomplishing the function of narrating and describing in reference to concrete topics. The Superior speakers work on the discourse level, organizing whole paragraphs into a unified flow. As such, they can state and support opinion, hypothesize, and deal with abstract topics, using forms and a lexicon comparable to what a native speaker would use to accomplish the same tasks.

The OPI demonstrates a high degree of inter-rater (tester) reliability, which insures its usefulness as a measuring instrument. (*Oral Proficiency Testing Manual*, pp. 12-14) Testers must attend a four-day workshop, following which they complete an initial set of ten practice interviews, which are evaluated by a trainer, and then administer and rate fifteen more interviews, five of which are reviewed by the trainer. Of these five interviews, all must be within the major level (Novice, Intermediate, etc.) and three ratings must agree precisely with the trainer's evaluation of the taped interview. No interview in this last set can represent an unratable sample if the new tester is to be certified. This procedure insures the accuracy of test results on the OPIs administered by the newly trained testers.

The *Proficiency Guidelines* present teachers with an evaluative tool, not with a prepackaged curriculum. They do *not* prescribe any given teaching method or approach, nor do they indicate length of time necessary to attain a specified level. As such, they can only evaluate what students at any point in their learning are able to do with the second language. They do remind us, however, that learning a language is much more than the manipulation of a certain number of grammatical forms and lexical items. As Heidi Byrnes has written, "a proficiency orientation. . .focuses on *use*—on what a native speaker of the language is expected to do and does in a natural setting as it occurs in the culture." (Byrnes, 1984, p. 195) This proficiency orientation does suggest that a sequence based only on the control of a discrete number of grammatical forms needs to be at very least supplemented and revised to incorporate the development of functional skills in various contexts. It does suggest a goal-oriented curriculum in which clear, but general statements of expected student performance at the end of each course are articulated in terms of the functions the students should be able to perform, the contexts in which they can perform them, the content that they can be expected to treat, the degree of accuracy they will demonstrate. (Medley, 1985) From these goal statements, specific outcome statements can be derived to map out a step-by-step means to attain the goals in the classroom. Once the goals have been established, the outcome statements provide the natural sequencing of the functions taught in a likely sequencing of topics. (Byrnes, 1984)

In this paper, we will examine standard university language classroom activities and textbooks, exploring their strength and weaknesses. We will describe several approaches that were taken to inject a traditional curriculum with some proficiency-oriented ingredients and report on the frustrating results. And finally we intend to outline the principles, structure, and content of a course designed from scratch, following the proficiency guidelines as defined by ACTFL and taking into consideration the principles outlined above.

The standard university course in beginning German is primarily structured around the blocks of grammar introduced. Each chapter is given a topical orientation that is more or less consistently followed through in the development of the dialogues, exercises, and reading materials. In the textbooks themselves, the authors rarely set goals for instruction, and if they do, they are written only in the vaguest possible terms, such as "an introduction to the essential elements of German grammar and basic vocabulary." It is difficult for an instructor to apply to the course his own notions of effective teaching or stray from the textbook too far because later chapters presuppose materials from earlier ones. All too often the book is in

the hands of an inexperienced graduate student who clings to the text as his only defense. As such, the textbook determines both the curriculum and the syllabus.

All available introductory German language textbooks are woefully inadequate to meet the goals set by a proficiency-oriented approach to instruction. In fact, they are inadequate to obtain almost any truly satisfactory results. In structure and content alike, even the most recent editions continue to adhere to outdated pedagogical and methodological principles. Their uniformly uninspired approach forces the instructor to follow a pace that is too fast because of the inordinate amount of material to be mastered. In regard to vocabulary, for example, our current textbook (Dollenmayer, 1984) requires 115 words to be learned in lesson five, seven weeks into the first semester, with no distinction between learning for recognition and learning for recall.

The grammar orientation of most first-year German textbooks reflects the widespread belief in the profession that the entire grammar must be taught during the first year and reviewed in the second when the students start reading literature in the second language. The first-year course ends up moving so rapidly that the past tense, for example, is introduced before the students can even control the present tense endings. Cases are piled up in German to the point where some of our students have even come away with the idea that all the nouns in a given sentence must be in the same case. Since the entire spectrum of grammar is to be covered, items are necessarily included that are useless because they cannot be applied to speech production at this level. For instance, all conjunctions have to be learned, even though many of them are not even found frequently in speech of native speakers, such as "while" or "although." The passive voice and all subjunctives are introduced and practiced even though these grammar categories are mostly used by advanced or superior speakers and cannot be expected to be mastered by novice or intermediate speakers. Grammar is also not distinguished according to its applicability to various language skills. For instance, the simple past tense (preterite) in German is used almost exclusively in writing. There is, at the beginning level, no need for reproduction of this tense in oral communication. It is a grammatical item to be recognized, not to be learned actively. The same is true for the genitive, the future tenses, certain demonstrative pronouns, among other features. The reason for this grammar orientation lies close at hand: grammar can be easily taught and the student's achievement in learning the material can be easily measured by discrete item tests. The whole process is neat and clean and fairly easy to implement.

Reading texts are usually created by the textbook author for the stereotypical student. They are, without exception, boring if not insulting to

even the modest intellect: Exchange student meets German student with whom he shares his trials and tribulations while trying to cope with the strange German ways. More advanced chapters venture into revised literary texts which are of little concern to the majority of our students who do not major in language and literature. Most such texts are unsuitable for learning to read as they confine themselves to material learned up to that point and, due to their reduced linguistic and informational quality, are void of elements that allow predictions as to what is to come and, consequently, make comprehension unnecessarily difficult.

Workbooks and laboratory materials are equally deplorable in most cases. Most exercises are not only ludicrous in terms of intended meaning but also non-productive because they require totally artificial language production. To practice adjective endings, one book offers the following statement: "I like fresh vegetables, but I cannot eat fresh bread, fresh butter, fresh fish and fresh eggs." (Crean, et. al., 1981, p. 351) Usually the students are required to jump from one topic to another within one exercise unit (e.g., "Why is Thomas going into the bookstore?" followed by, "What does the customs official want to see?") because rarely is a context established that allows for nearly authentic speech production and is, thus, conducive to internalizing the new material.

Recently, many textbooks have claimed a "communicative orientation" by the addition of so-called communication exercises, but these same books retain the full inventory of grammar while adding on yet more material that is supposed to "personalize" the instruction. These attempts are mostly cosmetic because they are only add-ons and frequently do not thematically mesh with the chapter in which they are found. They often require the students to perform functions that go far beyond their linguistic, if not their cognitive abilities (e.g., the expression of an opinion about the welfare system in the Federal Republic of Germany). Even so-called personalized questions are frequently not contextualized so that the students are required to complete mental leaps as the topic of conversation turns from where they live to their major at the university, to the ages of their brothers and sisters, to their opinions about their German class. It would certainly tax a native speaker to follow such disjointed conversation, say, at a cocktail party. How much more does lack of context frustrate our students because they have difficulty both understanding the spoken/written language and expressing themselves. The sheer bulk of the textbook also means that little time is left over for conversational activities, especially when the book is in the hands of inexperienced graduate assistants.

Due to such shortcomings in textbooks and our subsequent inadequate teaching strategies, development of usable communicative skills falls short of the most modest of standards. By the time the few students who are

sufficiently courageous enter into the intermediate level courses, they still cannot express themselves comfortably about everyday topics, their reading and writing skills are deficient, and their motivation is seriously impaired.

Our dissatisfaction with language teaching under the limitations imposed by inadequate textbooks is shared by colleagues nationwide. Professor Wilga M. Rivers, Harvard University, addressing the state of health in the teaching of foreign languages, or rather the alarming lack thereof, demanded that "language teaching can no longer be talking about grammar, turning over pages and pages of boring exercises, and wading through dull and tedious readings." (Rivers, 1985, p. 38) She suggests, instead, that authentic materials and a proficiency orientation be used in the classroom.

During fall semester 1984, the authors first planned and taught an intensive beginning German course in which they incorporated some of the insights suggested by a proficiency orientation. This seven-credit-hour course met five days each week, MWF for 50 minutes, TTH for 75 minutes. In addition, students were assigned to one of three one-hour per week conversation sessions with a native speaker graduate assistant. They met at a time convenient for the students involved. The course was scheduled at the noon hour so as to attract professional people from the community. The teaching responsibility was divided so that one person taught the MWF sequence, the other TTH. The fifteen-student enrollment consisted of approximately 60 percent traditional students and 40 percent non-traditional, the later group including two housewives, two university employees, and two senior citizens. All students were screened in advance to determine their motivation for enrolling in an intensive German course. Those students who had studied German previously were not allowed to enroll. All students understood before enrollment what kind of experience awaited them. This enrollment was attained after extensive advertising with posters and radio and newspaper announcements. The previous year, colleagues in Spanish had had good success with a similar intensive course.

The course was essentially planned before we participated in the ACTFL Curriculum Planning Workshop during August 1984 at the University of South Carolina (Columbia). We had selected *Neue Horizonte* (Dollenmayer, et al 1984) as our text because of its authentic dialogues and desirable sequencing of grammatical features. We limited our planned work with the textbook to ten chapters (of eighteen) in order to allow sufficient time for communicative activities. This number should be compared to the eight chapters that were scheduled to be covered in the regular first semester beginning German course during Fall 1985 (four credit hours). The course plan was fairly traditional in that we allowed the textbook to determine the material taught. The MWF sequence concentrated on the grammatical

structures, while the TTH sessions sought to develop conversational and reading skills.

What we were able to accomplish in this course can be judged by two transcripts from taped oral interviews at the end of the course. The first transcript (see Figure 1) is from an interview with a woman who represented the highest level of achievement attained during the intensive course. The second candidate (see Figure 2) represents the most modest achievement. The interviews were transcribed as faithfully as possible; some attempt was made to approximate mispronunciations through the standard German spelling system.

Figure 1

Transcript of Part of an Oral Interview at the End of First Semester of Intensive German

Interview § 1:

Interviewer:	Wie geht es Ihnen heute?
Student:	Es geht mir gut heute, und Ihnen?
I:	Mir geht es auch gut, danke. Wie finden Sie dieses Wetter?
S:	Es ist sehr schön heute, ein bi*B*chen neblig, aber warm und ... manchmal sonnig.
I:	Was tun Sie hier an solchen Tagen?
S:	Ich spiele gern Tennis, und ich schwimme gern. Es ist ein bi*B*chen kühl für Schwimmen.
I:	Im Freien sowieso.
S:	Vielleicht im Hallenbad.
I:	Was werden Sie wirklich tun heute nachmittag?
S:	Ich mu*B* arbeiten. Ich habe noch eine Prüfung.
I:	Wann schreiben Sie diese Prüfung?
S:	Freitag morgen.
I:	Also, Sie haben noch Zeit.
S:	Ich habe so viel zu tun.
I:	Sie haben natürlich auch Ihre Familie.
S:	Ja, aber meine Familie haben ... hat mir nich gesehen.
I:	Ja, wirklich? Was macht Ihre Familie während Sie Prüfungen schreiben?
S:	Mein Mann mu*B* das Essen kochen und meine Tochter auch. Aber sie sind nett und sie sind ... sympatisch.
I:	Wieviele Kinder haben Sie?
S:	Ich habe drei Kinder.

I: Also, alle Töchter, oder?
S: Ich habe zwei Töchter und ein Sohn.
I: Und wie alt ist der Sohn?
S: Er ist ... dreizehn Jahre.
I: Und wie lange sind Sie schon verheiratet?
S: Ich bin ... 19 Jahren verheiratet.
I: Ich gratuliere. Das ist sehr schön. Was macht Ihr Mann beruflich?
S: Er ist Offizier in Armee.
I: Und was macht er, was sind seine Pflichten in der Armee?
S: Jetzt, er hat eine Bataillon, ist das ein Wort?
I: Das kann man sagen. Auf welchem Gegiet ist das? Ist das in der Infanterie?
S: Ja, Infanterie, aber jetzt hat er viele Soldaten und Soldaten, neue Soldaten und nach Training ...
I: Meinen Sie Rekruten?
S: Und nach Training diese Soldaten machen Infanterie und Artillerie.
I: Meinen Sie, er arbeitet mit Rekruten?
S: Ja.

The first interview presents a candidate who is quite participative in the conversation. She is able to create with the language and is speaking primarily on the sentence level. If the additional parts of the interview had been transcribed, some ability to speak in past time would be evident. She is somewhat dependent on the interviewer, but usually can hold up her part of the conversation.

Figure 2

Interview § 2:

Interviewer: Guten Tag!
Student: Guten Tag, mein Herr.
I: Wie geht es Ihnen?
S: Ich gehe gut. Ich bin gut ... und Ihnen?
I: Mir geht's auch gut, danke. Was halten Sie von diesem Wetter heute?
S: Die Wesser ist ein Bi*B*chen kalt, aber es ist ... nett. Ich glaube, da*B* es... da*B* das Wetter will ... better sein.

I: Ja, kann sein, das wei*B* ich auch nicht. Können Sie mir sagen, können Sie ein bi*B*chen über Ihre Familie erzählen? Haben Sie eine Frau?

S: Ich habe ein Frau ... eine Frau. Ich hat vier Kinder giboren, aber eins ist tot ... ich hat zwei Sonne und zwei Tochter. Alle Kinder ... Kinder sind married au*B*er der Sohn. Ich habe zwei Gro*B*tochter. Das ist alles.

I: Wohnen Ihre Kinder noch bei Ihnen?

S: Nein, meine Kinder, zwei Kinder wohne in NM und ein Tochter, die junge, sie leben in IL.

I: Und was machen Sie beruflich?

S: Ich bin ein ... a ... Chemiker. Ich arbeite als Geochemist. Ich ... ich ... kenne nicht, was ein Geochemist ist, aber ich lerne.

I; Sind Sie auch Student?

S: Ja, ich bin eine Student für Deutsch, Mathematik und Computer Science.

I: Das ist aber viel. Wie Kurse belegen Sie?

S: Drei ... drei Kurse. Ich belege drei Kurse. But, ich ... ich bin ein special Student. Ich zahle nicht.

I: Wie schön!

S: Ich wei*B* nicht, warum ... ich denke...I've taken... ich habe ... zu viel Kurse gelegt...gebleiben...gelegt.

The speaker in the second interview is still quite reactive and dependent on the interview for the flow of conversation, although there are some emerging signs that he is trying to be creative with the language. Every sentence contains quite severely fractured grammar, but he is able to use what he has memorized to try to say what he wants to. We have purposely not rated these interviews according to the ACTFL/ETS Oral Proficiency Guidelines because it is important not to equate the end of a given course with a particular rating. Students progress in speaking at different rates. As we will discuss below, the guidelines do not provide course goals.

As mentioned above, each student met once a week in a small group with a native speaker to speak the language. Neither instructor ever went to these conversation sessions in order to allow the students the freedom to experiment with the language without fear that the teacher was noting every error they made. We found that the students enjoyed these conversation hours a great deal and that they profited at least by a growing confidence that they could communicate in German.

In class, we made a concentrated effort to orient the materials to the development of conversational skills. While none of the exercises we built

into the course will surprise the reader, they are listed here in order of increasing amounts of required student language production: teacher-initiated questions; questions on dialogues and reading; teacher-initiated indirect questions; descriptions of concrete objects (with partners); narrations of sequences of concrete events (with partners); role-plays; and group and class conversations where the students were in charge.

After teaching this first intensive German course, which was followed by an intensive intermediate course during spring 1985, we applied for grant money to develop a new intensive beginning German course that would be based more consistently on the curricular implications of the Oral Proficiency Guidelines than was the first course. As of this writing, the course has not been taught, although the initial development has been completed.

Since the Oral Proficiency Guidelines are empirical statements of the observable ranges of non-native performance in the language, they do not lend themselves as course goal statements. Students learn languages in different ways and at different rates. As one goes up the scale, the amount of material to be controlled increases geometrically to the point where for Advanced, for example, the list of possible contexts/contents can not be effectively enumerated. Since the statements themselves are global, courses in which students expect to be tested on concretely identified course content cannot be based on these descriptions of proficiency. Instead, course goals need to be developed that indicate *which* functions the students will learn to perform, in *which* contexts and with *which* content, and with *what* degree of accuracy. As such, these statements should reflect what actually will be treated during the course. During the 1984 ACTFL Curriculum Planning Workshop at the University of South Carolina, goal statements for four semesters of German instruction were written (see Appendix A). It must be emphasized that these goal statements were largely based on what we felt were realistic achievements for our students at USC and are, therefore, not empirical. They were not meant as exit criteria, but rather as goals to provide the course with a unifying element and to articulate the four levels of instruction. We tried to take into account variables such as prior language background of the students (primarily monolingual English), motivation, and university curriculum constraints (50 minutes class length MWF, 75 minutes TTH; four class meetings per week for the first semester, three for the following three semesters; and scheduling problems) that would affect student performance. The goal statements reflect a conscious attempt to introduce a function in one particular context and then to recycle it in different contexts. Accuracy was addressed in degrees: conceptual understanding, partial control, full control. These theoretical curriculum planning concerns, commonly given the umbrella designation "spiraling" (Medley

1985), allow the student to be introduced to structures at one point for conceptual control that will be taken up again later in the course sequence for partial control, and then again considered subsequently in an even wider range of contexts for full control. The goals for reading, listening comprehension, and writing were formulated with reference to the first edition of the *ACTFL Provisional Guidelines* (1982).

For our particular one-semester intensive course, we took the goal statements for the first two semesters (see Appendix B) together as the goal statements for the intensive course.

From these goals, concrete course objectives or outcome statements were derived that would provide the basic outline for the course and lead to syllabus development. These objectives describe which function the student will be taught (such as asking questions, giving information, describing, narrating) in which contexts (situational setting) and with what contents (topics). Furthermore, they include statements about expected accuracy, that is, how well the expected outcome compares to the way a native speaker would perform the same task in the same context, or, in terms of speaking, how acceptably or how precisely the student should be able to accomplish the task. For the first semester, we determined that the students should have the opportunity to learn how to greet people, to introduce, to provide information, to ask questions, to express needs, and to obtain services, and begin to learn how to narrate and describe. These functions go far beyond the course goals so as to prepare the way for the subsequent semesters. Complete mastery would not be expected, especially in the case of the last two. Course contexts were defined as survival situations, routine, and everyday life. Grammatical items were chosen on the basis of their wide application and importance to the function and context. This consideration meant that the subjunctive *würde* plus infinitive construction would be introduced very early in the sequence while the genitive case would probably wait until the second semester. Two-way prepositions (those requiring the accusative case to express motion and the dative case to express location) were to be introduced first, followed by the prepositions requiring dative and those requiring the accusative because the so-called two-way prepositions are much more important in giving directions, for example, than the others.

After an itemization of functions was made, we attempted to list them in a natural sequence, selecting a party for our initial context. In fact, we first considered structuring the entire semester around the functions normally performed at a party in the Federal Republic, but later discarded this idea because of the relatively complicated language involved in discussing politics, one of the favorite German casual conversation topics, even with relative strangers. Introductions were selected as the first

function, to be followed by some first-person narrative that provides essential personal information. This latter function was to be introduced initially during the first two weeks and then recycled in other contexts in weeks three-four, five-six, and seven-eight (see Course Outline, Appendix B). In terms of accuracy, we felt it necessary to begin immediately with the Nominative/Accusative distinction, which would be used at the beginning in first person narration only, then in weeks three-four in the expression of need, in weeks five-six in description, and in weeks 9-10 in narration and description. All through the course, emphasis was placed on vocabulary building, partially in recognition of the relative contribution of vocabulary at the early stages of speaking (see Higgs and Clifford, 1982). We also attempted to build into the syllabus sufficient opportunity to develop both listening comprehension and some reading ability (Byrnes, 1985) and therefore introduced structures for recognition that could be recycled during later semesters for partial or full control.

Listening comprehension materials, both for classroom and lab use, were derived (in edited form) from three sources: 1) authentic radio programs (weather forecasts, surprisingly, turned out to be much too difficult for this level); 2) records and TV programs (news, weather, children's programs, commercials); and 3) taped native speakers, loosely following a script. We insisted on authentic materials, even if they contained vocabulary and structures not yet introduced because we felt that beginners need to learn to listen for the main idea and not to be discouraged by their lack of comprehension of detail. In the recycling process, they can pick up finer points not essential to understanding of the basic message.

For the development of reading skills, we selected the book *Lesekurs Deutsch für Anfänger* (Wirbelauer, 1983) because we consider this the best collection of texts on the market. It provides a variety of authentic materials ranging from poetry to literary prose to texts about geography, economics, culture, and more. These texts were not intended for conversation purposes since the topics require speaking skills that far surpass the abilities of the beginning language learner. But since they are well written, carefully graded and supplemented with appropriate comprehension exercises, they lend themselves well for the development of reading skills, from scanning to reading for total comprehension.

While the introduction to speaking was carefully coordinated in terms of functions, contexts, and topics and while the ingredients necessary for simple communication were kept at a managable minimum, listening and reading practice evolved around different kinds of themes and topics, not necessarily complementing the material mastered actively, but certainly amplifying it. Moreover, the level of difficulty increased rapidly, which seemed permissible since these materials were only used for passive

comprehension, not for active reproduction. These materials were also designed to fulfill the need for an introduction to the broad spectrum of things German, be they cultural, geographical, or political.

Initially the course described here was scheduled to be taught during the fall 1985 semester. Despite heavy advertisment and complimentary recommendations from the students of our previous intensive courses, we had a low enrollment, which forced us to cancel the class. This can be partially attributed to the fact that the auditing fee was raised to that of regular course enrollment fees (for $420, so our clientele from the community argued, one can take a trip to Germany and learn the language through total immersion). Furthermore, we have only a limited number of candidates for German language study in this region and among the student body, and we may have exhausted the number of people interested in German with our first intensives—for the time being. We will wait until the pool of Germanophiles has replenished itself hoping that this will happen soon because we are eager to put our plans and materials to work. In the meantime, it is our strong feeling that the process of designing and developing materials for a proficiency-based German class has given us a new perspective on the nature of language learning and a greater awareness of the need for change in the "established" approach to language teaching.

Appendix A

Goals for the First Four Semesters of German Instruction: University of South Carolina

Semester 1

1 Speaking. Students can adapt and personalize memorized material to form questions, statements, and polite requests in everyday situations in a way which is comprehensible to a native speaker used to dealing with foreigners.

2 Listening. Students can comprehend communications pertaining to familiar situations and recombinations of known structures and vocabulary in a well-defined context, including statements, questions, and commands.

3 Reading. Students can comprehend simple connected discourse on familiar topics using recombinations of known and highly contextualized unknown vocabulary in basic sentence structures.

4 Writing. Students can record in writing what they are able to say and can begin to create phrases and sentences communicating everyday practical needs.

Semester 2

1 Speaking. Students can create sentences in response to perceived needs, desires, and interests and can convey limited autobiographical information in a way comprehensible to a native speaker used to dealing with foreigners.

2 Listening. Students can comprehend communication on familiar topics in different time frames with ease and begin to use contextual cues for understanding unfamiliar situations and topics.

3 Reading. Students can comprehend connected discourse on familiar topics with ease and scan highly contextualized, well-written texts on topics of interest for specified information and skim for main ideas.

4 Writing. On topics of interest, students can create sentences and begin to use cohesive devices leading to the development of paragraph structure.

Semester 3

1 Speaking. Students can maintain simple conversations on familiar topics, including diversified biographical information in a way comprehensible to native speakers who usually do not deal with foreigners.
2 Listening. Students can comprehend transactional conversations on a variety of concrete topics in a highly contextualized setting and can extract specified information from short, connected discourse on less familiar topics.
3 Reading. Students can comprehend in greater depth texts with a high degree of predictability on less familiar topics by utilizing context cues.
4 Writing. Students can compose paragraphs on topics of interest with greater ease and precision, using various resources.

Semester 4

1 Speaking. Students can initiate and participate in general conversations on factual topics with some reference to relevant time frames and are beginning to connect sentences.
2 Listening. Students can comprehend essential points of conversation among native speakers on a variety of concrete topics and can determine the main ideas in short connected discourse.
3 Reading. Students can read for information clearly structured, extended discourse on a variety of topics including texts on familiar abstract topics of low semantic and syntactic complexity.
4 Writing. Students can write moderately extended discourse on topics within the context of their own experience, i.e., some narration, description, dialogue, brief summaries.

Appendix B
COURSE OUTLINE: GERMAN FOR PROFICIENCY (Mosher/Resch)

TEXT: Lesekurs Deutsch für Anfänger

Wks.	Functions:	Content:
1-2	greetings 1st pers. narration 1st pers. description statements with *Sie* closed quest. with *Sie* negation	greetings family and friends student life & activities classroom activities classroom furnishings study tools
3-4	expressions of need questions 1st pers. narration 3rd pers. narration	lodging & food numbers, money student & family life hobbies
5-6	question formation 1st & 3rd pers. narration & description expressions of needs obtaining services	transportation directions automobile time entertainment
7-8	narration & description 1st, 3rd pers.	home family and friends life in dorm or apartment

Accuracy:	Passive Skills:	Reading:
pres. tense "ich"	greetings	alphabet
pres. tense "Sie"	weather	cognates
nom./acc.:	signs	dictionary
der/ein	classroom instr.	nouns
mein/Ihr	*imperative*	*adjectives*
haben	imperative	adjectives
gern	self-intro by teacher	pronouns
es gibt		*Einleitung*
1st pers. pl.	greetings	questions
3rd pers. sg.	weather	time phrases
nom./acc. pron. 1st/3rd	signs	*Kapitel 1*
verbs	menus	verbs
separ. prefix verbs	questions	interrog.
modals: *möchte, können wollen*	imperatives	*Kapitel 2*
	classroom instr.	
verbs with stem changes		
ich weiß		
indep. clause w.o.		
acc. pron. 1st & 3rd		
possessive adjectives: 3rd pers.		
nom./acc./dat.	timetables	*Kapitel 3*
two-way preps.	train dept. & arr. info.	
question words	texts about transport.	
modals: *dürfen, müssen*	advertising (cars, DB)	
werden	imperatives	
würde for polite requests		
uns, unser		
dat. pronouns: 1st, 3rd sg.		
dat. prepositions	geography U.S. & Germany	*Kapitel 4*
separ. prefixes		
brauchen		
imperative		
coord. conjunctions		

9-10	narration & description of past events expression of needs and	routine at home time reviewed & expand purchases
11-12	desires question formation obtain services description in past	clothing souvenirs medical food postage bank & money
13-14	description in past structure of longer discourse	entertainment sports student life & activities purchases

aber, und, oder		
subord. conjunctions		
weil, daB		
wissen, kennen, können		
	curriculum vitae	*Kapitel 5*
reflective verbs		
pres. perf. tense of weak verbs	biographical data on other people	*Kapitel 6*
acc. prepositions		
past tense of "sein" & "haben"		
pres. perf. tense of strong verbs	biographical info in para. form	*Kapitel 7*
question words	shopping language	
reflexives	advertising	
lassen	bank literature & transactions	
könnte, hätte		
past tense of *können wollen, müssen, werden*		
verbs with prepos.	sport broadcasts & reports	*Kapitel 8*
pres. perf. mixed verbs	recreational act.	
imperative with *wir*		
adverbs		
du/ihr: verb forms, pron.		

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